United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

Historic name Missouri River Bridge

Other names/site number Wolf Creek Bridge/24LC131

2. Location

street & number Milepost 11 on Old US Highway 91 (Recreation Road) ☐ not for publication

city of town Two Miles Northeast of Wolf Creek ☒ vicinity

State Montana code MT county Lewis & Clark code 049 zip code 59648

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ____ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___local

Signature of certifying official | Date

Title | State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official | Date

Title | State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: | Signature of the Keeper | Date of Action

___ entered in the National Register _____

___ determined eligible for the National Register _____

___ determined not eligible for the National Register _____

___ removed from the National Register _____

___ other (explain:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

	private
	public - Local
X	public - State
	public - Federal
	private

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

	building(s)
	district
	site
X	structure
	building(s)
	object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		Objects
		buildings
1	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Montana's Historic Steel Truss Bridges

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related(vehicular)=Bridge

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/road-related(vehicular)=Bridge

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions)
Continuous Warren Through Truss	foundation: Concrete
	walls:
	roof:
	other: Steel, Concrete

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Missouri River Bridge consists of one contributing structure: a riveted continuous span Warren through truss that was constructed in 1933. The bridge consists of 3-spans resting on reinforced concrete abutments and piers. It is 476-feet in length and 21-feet wide. There are two reinforced concrete T-beam approach spans. The bridge crosses the Missouri River on old US Highway 91 (now called the Recreation Road) about two miles northeast of the community of Wolf Creek near the mouth of the Prickly Pear Canyon. The bridge retains integrity of workmanship and feeling and the setting has not significantly changed since the structure's construction during the Great Depression. It is the first continuous span bridge designed and built by the Montana Highway Department in the state.

Narrative Description

The Missouri River Bridge is located in the upper Missouri River valley of southwestern Montana. The bridge crosses the upper Missouri River about two miles below Prickly Pear (Wolf Creek) Canyon and ten miles above the head of the Missouri River Canyon in a narrow valley between the two canyons. The bridge is located on Cretaceous sedimentary shale and limestone that was deposited approximately 65 million years ago. The valley separates the Big Belt Mountains, a largely Precambrian shale and mudstone formation in this area that formed about a billion years ago and the geologically

more recent Adel Mountains, the remnants of a volcanic pile that formed 50 million years ago. The valley is grassy and broken by numerous drainages, some of which contain water that flows into the Missouri north of the bridge. The rolling terrain is now utilized primarily for cattle grazing and some hay production. The bridge carries the Recreation Road (old US Highway 91) across the Missouri River. Although bypassed by Interstate 15 in 1967, it continues to provide a crossing for local residents and the hordes of anglers, rafters, and hunters who utilize this area. The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks Devils Kitchen Fishing Access Site is located adjacent to the bridge on the east side of the river.[1]

The Missouri River Bridge is a 3-span riveted Warren continuous through truss structure with two reinforced concrete T-beam approach spans. The bridge is 476-feet in length and 21-feet wide with a roadway width of 20-feet. The superstructure consists of 20 panels (even-numbered panels are standard to Warren trusses) with a 130-foot span, a 180-foot main span, and a 135-foot span. The substructure consists of two reinforced concrete piers. Each pier consists of two concrete columns connected by a concrete web wall. The abutments are reinforced concrete and stepped at the end walls to accommodate the bridge ends and the cast steel rocker bearings.

A continuous span structure functions and appears as a single span delineated by the piers. Consequently there are two 135-foot spans and a 185-foot main span. The upper chords consist of continuous steel plate riveted to the top flanges of two laced channel sections. The lower chords are laced channel sections with batten plates. Vertical members are steel channel sections, while the diagonals are laced channel sections with batten plates. Portal braces are laced angle sections and the top struts are channel sections. The sway braces are angle sections and the top lateral braces are laced angle sections. The deck is supported by five lines of steel I-beam stringers resting on seven steel I-beam floor beams. The bottom lateral braces are angle sections. The stringers and I-beams support a concrete slab deck flanked by raised concrete curbs and steel channel section guardrails bolted to the vertical members.

There is a 21-foot reinforced concrete T-beam approach span connected to both ends of the bridge. The concrete girders are encased in concrete “towers’ that have been filled with rubble. The exterior of sidewalls are decorated with vertical grooves. The roadway is flanked by solid reinforced concrete guardwalls with recessed panels that have been bush-hammered. The endposts extend the height of the spans and are also decorated with vertical grooves standard to this type of approach structure.

Integrity

Other than routine maintenance, there have been no substantial changes to the Missouri River Bridge since its construction in 1933. The bridge is the standard continuous span steel Warren through truss design developed by Montana State Highway Department bridge engineers in 1933 and built until 1946. All of the structural components and features common to the design are present on the bridge and are unchanged. The bridge retains its distinctive truss configuration, distinctive guardrails, and concrete deck. The setting of the bridge site has not significantly changed. The surrounding area is still used for agricultural purposes and recreational purposes. The Wolf Creek Bridge retains all its essential elements of design, workmanship, and materials. It appears and functions as it did in 1933 as an important crossing of the Missouri River on the Recreation Road in southwestern Montana.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- [X] A — Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B — Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C — Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D — Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- [ ] A — owed by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B — removed from its original location.
- [ ] C — a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D — a cemetery.
- [ ] E — a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F — a commemorative property.
- [ ] G — less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Transportation

Period of Significance

1933-1959

Significant Dates

1933

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Montana Highway Department

William A. Roscoe Company

Period of Significance (justification)

The Period of Significance for this structure is 1933 to 1959. It encompasses its construction date and the time it served as an important component of US Highway 91 before it was bypassed by Interstate 15.

Criteria Consideratons (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of signficance and applicable criteria)

The Missouri River Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. The bridge is eligible under Criterion A because of its association with the federal government's New Deal construction and "make work" programs of the Great Depression. The bridge was also the first continuous span through truss structure designed and built by the department. The design proved more than suitable for wide river crossings and was utilized extensively from 1933 to 1946. This bridge provided the model for the seven continuous span bridges that followed. The process of constructing the bridge was also indicative the employment laws enacted by the federal government during the 1930s, including the number of hours that could be worked each week, the origin of the labor force, and the amount that could be paid them. The historical record for the construction of this bridge indicates a transition period where the federal government enforced standards for which the state highway department and contractor was unprepared. The bridge is also representative of the Montana Highway Department's Great Depression-era programs to provide efficient and modern roads and bridges for both private use and commerce. The bridge is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as the first continuous through truss span built in Montana and because it contains all of the structural components and features that were incorporated into the remaining seven continuous span bridges built by the department over the next thirteen years. The bridge retains all of its original structural components, its historic appearance and essentially its historic function as an important river crossing in southwestern Montana. The bridge is intact and unchanged and still conveys its historic appearance. Other than age and routine maintenance by highway forces, there are no substantial modifications or alterations to it.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The Missouri River Bridge is significant on a number of levels. It is the first of only eight continuous span steel through truss bridges constructed in Montana between 1933 and 1946 and is an excellent representative of the type. The bridge was built from standardized designs developed by the Montana Highway Department in 1933 and adapted specifically for this site. Continuous through trusses became the standard highway department structure for wide river crossings in the 1930s and were utilized for that purpose until 1946 when the department built its last truss structure (24PE1810). The bridge, moreover, was one of the first projects let by the Montana State Highway Commission after President Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacted the National Industrial Recovery Act in June 1933. Because of that, the highway department and the contractor, William P. Roscoe, were forced to adhere to strict employment guidelines. Since this was one of the first NIRA projects, the agency and Roscoe had some problems following the federal legislation. The Missouri River Bridge was the first bridge at this site and it accommodated the construction of a new highway alignment between Helena and Great Falls that was a part of US Highway 91. The bridge facilitated traffic on what would become a strategic highway during World War II as it provided a connection between the Butte mines, Helena, and the copper refinery and military airbase at Great Falls.

The Missouri River Bridge is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C because it is a stunning and intact example of the type of standardized continuous Warren through truss spans that the Montana Highway Department built in Montana from 1933 to 1946. Continuous spans were used for river crossings more than 1,000-feet in width. The design was particularly adaptable to different crossing conditions and was easy to build and were affordable to the state. There have been no structural modifications to the bridge and vehicular collisions have not significantly damaged any important structural components. The bridge retains its historic appearance and configuration with all of its original structural components and features intact along with its association with US Highway 91. The bridge, moreover, still functions as an important crossing on what is now a recreational access route and farm-to-market road.

Engineering Significance

In 1933, the Montana Highway Department began designing and constructing continuous span through truss span bridges during the Great Depression. The Missouri River Bridge was the first bridge of this type built by the department. It is exemplary of the continuous through truss type which was built primarily at wide river crossings. All but one of the continuous through truss bridges, including this one, were built by prolific Billings, Montana contractor William P. Roscoe. The continuous span bridge was well-suited to better accommodating traffic demands than the old multi-span riveted Warren through trusses. Indeed, the style still accommodates modern traffic demands with three of the six continuous spans still extant and functioning in their original capacity. This bridge provided the model of the seven continuous through trusses that followed until 1946.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

In November 1932, the highway commissioners hired the William P. Roscoe Company of Billings for a new bridge across the Missouri River just northeast of Wolf Creek. The bridge, along with the Missouri River bridge at Hardy, were components of the new U.S. Highway 91 alignment between Great Falls and Helena. Prior to 1932, motorists traveling between the two cities had to take a circuitous route around the Missouri River canyon that had changed little since it was part of the old territorial Benton Road. The new road through the scenic Missouri River canyon included a new type of truss bridge that had hitherto not been constructed in Montana. The Wolf Creek Bridge is a simply-supported continuous span Warren through truss. Instead of individual spans each delineated at the piers, a continuous through truss is essentially one single truss resting on three or more piers. The 476-foot bridge was the first continuous span truss built by the highway department in Montana.[2]

The Roscoe company began work on the bridge on December 10, 1932. Roscoe contracted with the Minneapolis Steel & Machinery Division of the Minneapolis-Moline Power Implement Company to fabricate the 274 tons of structural steel components for the bridge. That company, in turn, sub-contracted with the Inland Steel Company of Chicago, Illinois to provide that material. The Illinois Steel Company provided the cast steel parts of the bridge. Concrete was obtained from the Ideal Cement Company plant in Trident, Montana and the Pueblo-based Colorado Fuel and Iron Company supplied the reinforcing steel.[3]

Because the project was funded under the strict employment guidelines of the 1932 federal relief law, Roscoe had to make certain he followed its stipulations. The novelty of the bridge's design proved irresistible to the highway department's bridge staff, who made frequent trips to the construction site to observe its progress. The regular presence of so many state-employed engineers at the site made Roscoe nervous and compelled him to write Ben Ornburn a letter accusing him of sending his employees to spy on him. Ornburn responded that "If men have been placed on your work detectives, this have been done without the knowledge of the State Highway Department. We have never resorted to placing 'stool pigeons' on any contractors work . . . . It is our intention to make every reasonable effort to see that the labor provisions are enforced, but you can rest assured that we will do so by fair methods . . . ." He was not quite truthful with Roscoe. The highway department may not have had "stool pigeons" on every road and bridge project, but it did have a resident engineer on all its projects. Project Field Engineer H. H. List's job was to make sure that Roscoe followed the highway department's plans and complied with the federal employment provisions. If the contractor failed to comply, List reported back to Chief Engineer Rader, who reported the violation to the state highway commissioners.[4]

The Wolf Creek Bridge required new construction techniques, so department engineers and Roscoe experimented with its construction as they went along. The continuous span design meant that the bridge could not be permanently riveted until the entire structure had been assembled. The engineers were unsure about how it would function as an interconnected structure in regards to stresses and reactions. The engineers and contractor tested it by raising the structure from the piers and abutments to make sure it functioned correctly with hydraulic jacks equipped with pressure gauges borrowed by the Oregon Highway Department.[5]

Highway department bridge engineers flocked to the construction site while the bridge was under construction. The number of state employees at the site apparently made Roscoe uncomfortable, believing that the men were spying on him to make sure he followed the strict guidelines of the Emergency Construction Bridge program. He fired off a letter to Chief Bridge Engineer Ben Ornburn about the intrusions. Ornburn replied with a blistering letter that, apparently, ended the problem.

> If men have been placed on your work as detectives, this has been done without the knowledge of the State Highway Department. We have never resorted to placing "stool pigeons" on any contractors work and I am quite positive that neither the Bureau of Public Roads or the County Commissioners of this county have done so. It is our intention to make every reasonable effort to see that the labor provisions are enforced, but you can rest assured that we will do so by fair methods and will take up with the contractor for correction of any complaints which may come to us.

The Hoover Administration intended the Emergency Construction program to "create employment," by placing limiting the number of hours per week laborers could work on the project and stipulating that machinery be kept at a minimum to maximize the number of men employed. Consequently, Roscoe employed 33 local residents on the project from December 10, 1932 until he completed the project in August 1933.[6]

The Wolf Creek Bridge was the first of eight continuous through truss bridges built by the department through 1946. It was also the last major bridge built under the auspices of the Hoover Administration's relief programs and one of the most

expensive up to that time at a cost of $54,785.49. The bridge was an important component of US Highway 91, the primary north-south route in Montana. Interstate 15 bypassed the section of US 91 between Wolf Creek and Cascade in 1967.[7]

William P. Roscoe

Few men have had as big an impact on Montana's construction industry as William P. Roscoe. For thirty years from 1926 to 1956, Roscoe built more bridges in Montana than any other contractor employed by the Montana Highway Department. Although he specialized in the construction of large steel bridges, Roscoe also built reinforced concrete and timber bridges all over the state. Bridges built by his company include the Missouri River Bridge near Wolf Creek, and Yellowstone River bridges at Reed Point, Forsyth, and Glendive.[8]

Born in Wadena, Minnesota in February, 1886, William P. Roscoe dropped out of school in 1902 and worked in South Dakota as a cowboy for several years. In 1905, he returned to Minnesota and went to work for William and Arthur Hewett's Security Bridge Company. Unlike Montana's bridge engineers, who learned their trade in colleges and universities, the state's most successful bridge contractors learned their craft in the field from other bridge-builders. Roscoe went to work for the Hewett's as a laborer. Within a few years, he worked his way up to foreman and, by October, 1915, was the company's vice president when the Hewett's moved Security's headquarters to Billings. Roscoe continued his association with the Security Bridge Company until 1925, when he formed the W. P. Roscoe Company in Billings. William and Arthur Hewett dissolved the Security Bridge Company in 1926.[9]

During his thirty year career, the Roscoe company built bridges throughout Montana and was one of only contractors from which the highway department bridge engineers sought advice on construction problems. Bill Roscoe died in 1956. Soon after his death, Roscoe's family reorganized the company and formed Roscoe Steel and Culvert Company. Although the company no longer builds bridges, it still provides components for steel bridges in Montana and United States.[10]

Endnotes

1. David Alt and Donald W. Hyndman, *Roadside Geology of Montana*, (Missoula: Mountain Press Publishing, 1991), 271, 274-275.

2. State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 5, 227, 228 (4 November 1932).

3. Emergency Construction Highway Project No. 172-D, Unit 2, (hereafter referred to as ECHP no. 172-D, U2), Montana Highway Department Bridge Bureau Records, 1920-1985, Unprocessed Collection, Montana Historical Society Research Center, Helena.

4. ECHP no. 172-D, U2; "New Bridge between Craig and Wolf Creek," (White Sulphur Springs) *Meagher Republican*, 23 August 1933.

5. ECHP No. 172-D, U2.

6. Jon Axline*, Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*, (Helena: Montana Historical Society, 2005), 95; ECHP No. 172-D, U2.

7. State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 5, 227, 228 (4 November 1932).

8. Axline, *Conveniences Sorely Needed*, 113-114.

9. Tom Stout, *Montana: Its Story and Biography*, Volume 2 (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1921), 221-222; Fredric Quivik, *Historic Bridges of Montana*, (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1982), 43.

10. Interview with Jim Roscoe by author, April 2004; Quivik, *Historic Bridges*, 43.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Primary location of additional data:

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2
(do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	12	423140	5207540	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary for the Missouri River Bridge is a rectangle 476 x 25 feet. The rectangle encompasses the bridge and its approaches on both sides of the Missouri River. The boundary is centered on the bridge.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Boundaries for the Missouri River Bridge are drawn to encompass the five spans of the bridge, its immediate approaches, and that portion of the river spanned by the bridge. The width is increased beyond the measurements of the structure to include the piers and abutments.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jon Axline/Historian
organization Montana Department of Transportation date May 12, 2009
street & number 2701 Prospect Avenue telephone (406) 444-6258
city or town Helena state MT zip code 59620-1001
e-mail jaxline@mt.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Missouri River Bridge

City or Vicinity: Wolf Creek Vicinity

County: Lewis and Clark **State:** Montana

Photographer: Jon Axline

Date Photographed: June 2008

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ___.

this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Missouri River Bridge

County and State Lewis and Clark County, Montana

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)
Montana's Historic Steel Truss Bridges

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Axline, Jon. *Conveniences Sorely Needed: Montana's Historic Highway Bridges, 1860-1956*. (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2005).

Bridge Construction File: Emergency Construction Highway Project (ECHP) No. 172-D, Unit 2. Montana Highway Department Bridge Bureau Records, 1920-1985, Unprocessed Collection, Montana Historical Society Research Center, Helena.

Bridge Inspection File No. L25003011+00001. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Interview with Jim Roscoe, Grandson of William P. Roscoe, by Jon Axline, Montana Department of Transportation, March 2004.

"New Bridge Between Craig and Wolf Creek." (White Sulphur Springs) *Meagher Republican*, 23 August 1933.

Quivik, Fredric. *Historic Bridges of Montana*. (Washington DC: National Park Service, 1982).

State Highway Commission Meeting Minutes, Book 5. Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.

Stout, Tom. *Montana: Its Story and Biography*. Three volumes (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1921).

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Missouri River Bridge

County and State Lewis and Clark County, Montana

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)
Montana's Historic Steel Truss Bridges

Section number 12 Page 1

Name:	Missouri River Bridge (24LC131)
County and State:	Lewis and Clark County, Montana
Photographer:	Jon Axline
Date of Photograph:	June 2008
Location of original negative:	Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.
Description and view of camera:	North profile of truss spans and east portal. View to the southwest.
Photograph:	0001

Name:	Missouri River Bridge (24LC131)
County and State:	Lewis and Clark County, Montana
Photographer:	Jon Axline
Date of Photograph:	June 2008
Location of original negative:	Montana Department of Transportation. Helena, Montana.
Description and view of camera:	South profile of truss spans and east portal. View to the west.
Photograph:	0002

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Missouri River Bridge

County and State Lewis and Clark County, Montana

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Montana's Historic Steel Truss Bridges

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Photograph 001. North profile and east portal. Missouri River Bridge (24LC131). View to the southwest.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property Missouri River Bridge

County and State Lewis and Clark County, Montana

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Photo 0002. South profile and east portal. Missouri River Bridge. View to the west.